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1973

OPERATIONS AND TACTICS WORKING GROUP

SOVIET GENERAL PURPOSE NAVAL DEPLOYMENTS:  
CHARACTERISTICS AND TRENDS

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[REDACTED] General Purpose Naval Deployments:  
Characteristics and Trends

[REDACTED]  
Central Intelligence Agency

Introduction

The scope of deployment of Soviet general purpose naval forces expanded steadily during the late Sixties and drew world attention to the Soviet Navy, creating an impression of sustained growth. Between 1965 and 1970 these deployments grew fivefold and were extended into the Indian Ocean, Caribbean Sea, and West African waters. Since 1970, however, the rate of growth of Soviet naval activity in all areas has decreased.

The expansion of activity during the late Sixties reflected basic changes in the missions of the Soviet Navy. After World War II, Soviet naval operations were concerned chiefly with countering

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sea-launched attacks on the homeland. Then in the late Fifties, the threat of Western aircraft carriers and ballistic missile submarines prompted Soviet naval deployments into the Norwegian Sea, northwestern Pacific, and eastern Mediterranean Sea. Once the Soviets had begun operating on the high seas the opportunity for using naval forces to support Soviet interests in the Third World became a new rationale for "long cruises to distant oceans". Since the mid-Sixties the protection of Soviet "state interests" has emerged as a dominant theme in Soviet discussions of distant naval operations.

This paper traces the evolution of Soviet naval general purpose force deployments since World War II, showing the stabilization which has taken place since 1970. It assesses the current relationship between political and military roles of the Soviet Navy. It also discusses Soviet capabilities to augment their naval forces in distant areas and possible limitations on the expansion of routine operations. Finally, this paper presents indications of changes in the character of naval operations. It does not discuss ballistic missile submarine, hydrographic research, or space

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support ship activities.

A summary of the paper begins on page 37.

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## Evolution of Naval Activity

### Naval Activity Prior to 1965

The first recorded Soviet naval activity outside fleet home waters after World War II occurred in 1953, when ships of the Soviet Navy participated in a coronation fleet review in England. In the Fifties some 20 "show" visits were made to foreign ports. These visits were typically conducted by a Sverdlov class light cruiser accompanied by three or four destroyers and most of them took place in European ports.

Soviet naval exercises throughout the greater part of the Fifties were confined to home waters (see map) and were focused on the defense of these areas from opposing surface forces [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

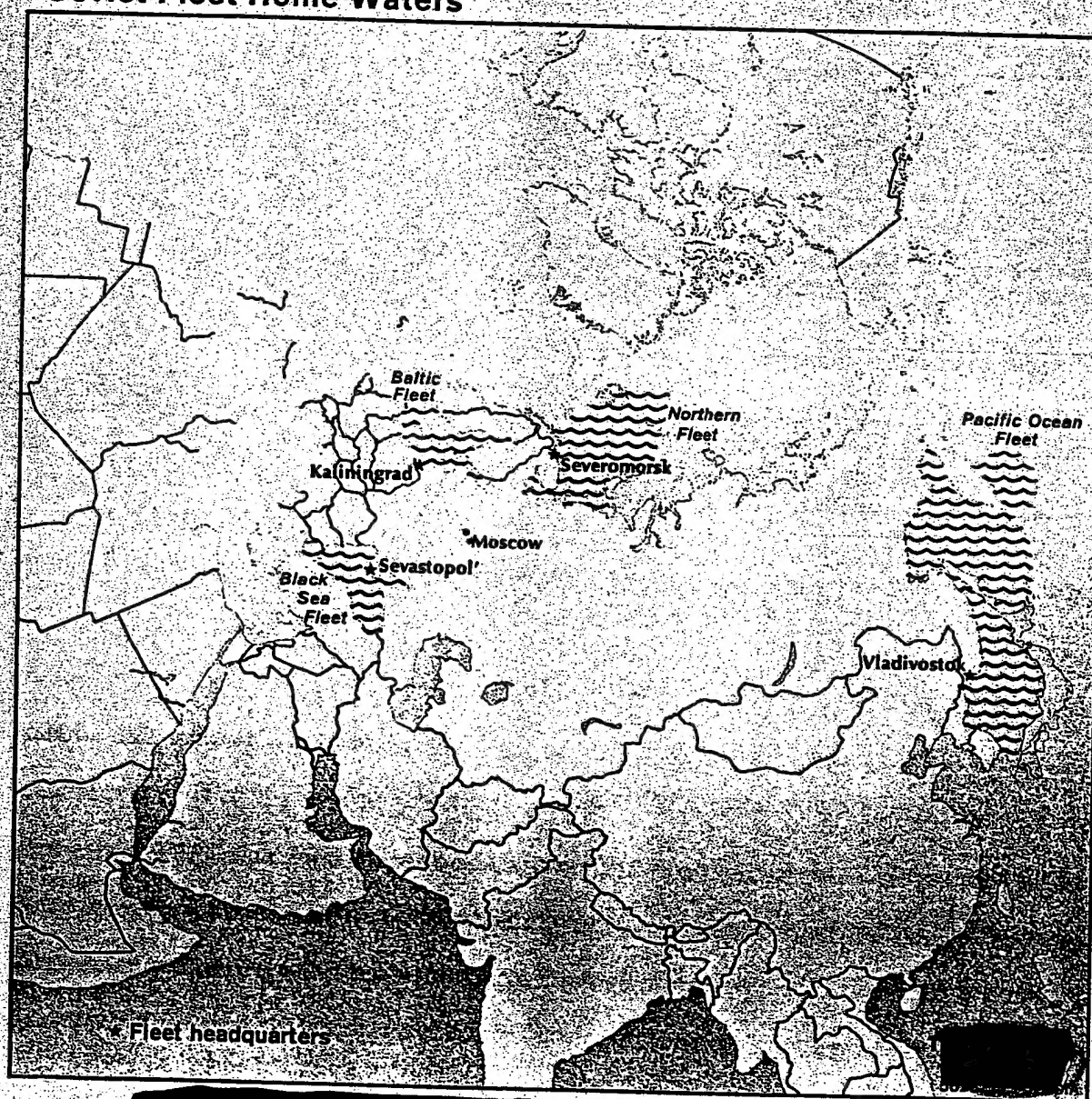
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## Soviet Fleet Home Waters



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In 1958 the Soviets extended the exercise activity of their Northern and Baltic Fleets into the Norwegian Sea [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The Soviet Pacific Ocean Fleet conducted similar exercises beginning in the mid-Fifties, but ships involved in them rarely ventured outside the Sea of Japan or Sea of Okhotsk.

The Soviets made their first attempt at basing naval units outside the USSR in 1958 when a squadron of medium range diesel powered attack submarines was based in Albania, thereby moving the first line of Black Sea naval defenses forward from the Bosphorus into the eastern Mediterranean. The Albania squadron, [REDACTED] was maintained until 1961, when an ideological split between Albania and the USSR caused its removal.

Two events in 1964 marked the beginning of Soviet naval deployments at their present level. One was a policy statement by the Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet Navy, Admiral Gorshkov, outlining the training objectives of the Soviet Navy with unprecedented stress on the conduct of long voyages. The other was the deployment of a small force of surface ships [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] to the Mediterranean Sea. This force was the forerunner of the USSR's first continuous naval presence outside its four fleet operating areas.

Growth: 1965-1970

The magnitude and distribution of deployed Soviet naval activity changed markedly from 1965 to 1970, when a period of stabilization began. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] This increase reflected the growth of the Soviet Mediterranean Squadron, particularly after the Arab-Israeli War in 1967. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The regional distribution of Soviet naval activity changed during the 1965-1970 period. The Mediterranean Sea's share of Soviet naval activity declined [REDACTED] while the portion of ship days in the Indian Ocean grew [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Ship days accumulated in the Pacific Ocean remained nearly constant [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and combined operations grew in Caribbean Sea and West African water [REDACTED]

Period of Stabilization

In 1971 a period of stabilization in Soviet naval deployments began. Soviet activity in the Atlantic, Mediterranean, Caribbean, and West African areas measured in terms of ship days has been relatively constant for two years. Operations in the Pacific Ocean have declined [REDACTED]

An exception to this overall stabilization occurred in the Indian Ocean, where totals rose [REDACTED] between 1971 and 1972.

This rise [REDACTED] was due mainly to the augmentation of Soviet forces in that area during the India-Pakistan war. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

If the atypical foreign aid type deployments to Bangladesh are not included in the ship day total for 1972, the trend in worldwide Soviet general purpose force activity has been stable since 1970.

← This trend is illustrated in the chart, which reflects the statistical detail at annex. The possibility that fiscal and logistic constraints have set limitations on Soviet naval activity is discussed on pages 25 through 30.

Variations in the time that deployed Soviet ships spend at anchor or in port limit the extent to which ship day totals can be taken as direct indicators of levels of Soviet naval operations.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Surface ships in the Mediterranean Sea spend only a quarter of their time underway, while those in the Atlantic\* and Pacific are underway almost constantly.

---

\* *Excluding Caribbean Sea and West African operations.*

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### Soviet Naval Objectives

The [REDACTED] ship days accounted for by deployed Soviet naval units in 1972\* were in support of two main objectives: defense of the USSR against Western naval forces, and the extension of Soviet political influence. Soviet naval activity in the North Atlantic, the Mediterranean, and the north-western Pacific Ocean reflects defense whereas Soviet task groups routinely in waters more distant from the USSR--the Indian Ocean, Caribbean Sea, and West African waters--are tailored for a political role and mostly have low military capabilities against modern navies.

### Defense Against Western Navies

[REDACTED]

In the portions of these areas nearest the USSR, the

\* [REDACTED]

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Soviets deploy their newest and best equipped ships and react to the presence of Western naval task forces by attempting to track them continuously and by simulating tactical strikes against them. The Soviets usually conduct one large exercise each year in the Norwegian Sea and another in Northwestern Pacific. These exercises emphasize defense against naval penetration of home fleet waters. Smaller scale exercises take place in the Mediterranean Sea, primarily in its eastern half [REDACTED]

Atlantic. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

A large segment of these operations [REDACTED] was taken up by transits of units between Northern Fleet ports and the Mediterranean or Caribbean Seas. The remaining [REDACTED] consisted of [REDACTED] patrols at the entrances of the Baltic and Barents Seas, exercises in the North Atlantic and Norwegian Sea, and surveillance of US and NATO forces [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

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Naval auxiliary ship operations in the Atlantic--

[REDACTED] were roughly divided between direct support of other naval activity and intelligence ship deployments.

Pacific. Ships of the Soviet Pacific Ocean Fleet,

[REDACTED] operate in a pattern similar to that of Soviet ships in the Atlantic. Surface combatant activity consists primarily of transits to and from the Indian Ocean and patrols in the southern entrance to the Sea of Japan.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Mediterranean Sea. Over the past two years, the Soviet Mediterranean Squadron has consisted of [REDACTED] auxiliaries. In 1971 and 1972 the surface combatant portion of this force included [REDACTED] cruisers or large [REDACTED] ships (Sverdlov, Moskva, Kresta or Kynda class units), [REDACTED] destroyer or destroyer escort sized units, [REDACTED] mincraft, and [REDACTED] amphibious ships. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

The squadron is normally supported by [REDACTED] major fleet auxiliaries [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] The remainder of the auxiliaries are miscellaneous smaller units including light cargo ships, merchant tankers, intelligence collectors, tugs, water carriers, and diving tenders. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Soviet exercises indicate that the primary war-time mission of the USSR's naval force in the Mediterranean Sea is probably to counter the carriers and submarines of the US Sixth Fleet in waters east

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of the Straits of Sicily. A secondary mission is the interdiction of NATO shipping.

[REDACTED]

Unlike the Atlantic and Pacific naval activity, Mediterranean operations are politically useful to the Soviets. By providing a counter to the US Sixth Fleet, the Squadron lends credence to the Soviets' self-appointed role as protector of the Arab states

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in the Middle East. Soviet naval units can be positioned at any point in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea within a day's time, giving the USSR the capability of interposing its forces between a client state and an opposing force.

The political role of the Soviet Mediterranean Squadron is also evidenced by its program of port calls, occasional joint exercises with littoral states such as Syria, [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

#### Extension of Political Influence

Soviet naval forces in the Indian Ocean, Caribbean Sea and West African waters have been tailored primarily for political rather than military missions. The Soviet forces normally deployed to these areas make many port calls but are otherwise largely inactive. Soviet task groups operating in the Indian Ocean and West African waters have been mainly surface ships [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Surface combatants fitted with long range ASW sonars or the newer surface-to-air missile systems have been almost

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completely absent. In the Caribbean, however, where an intention is to impress US observers, the Soviets have employed their newer combatants [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

#### Indian Ocean

During the past three years the Soviets have maintained a continuous naval presence in the Indian Ocean, typically including [REDACTED] destroyer or cruiser, [REDACTED] fleet minesweepers, [REDACTED] amphibious ship, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] auxiliary support ships. With this nucleus of ships, the Soviets can demonstrate their political interest in the area and introduce additional units less provocatively than if no ships were already there.

Goodwill visits are a principal objective of Soviet operations in the Indian Ocean. A trend toward more port visits by warships in the few countries which are most receptive to the Soviet presence--Somalia, South Yemen and Iraq--has been evident, however. These three countries accounted for about 20 of 60 combatant port visits in the Indian Ocean during 1968 and 1969, but approximately 45 of 65 such visits in 1971 and 1972.

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During periods of tension, Soviet ships support countries friendly to the USSR. The presence of Soviet warships in Somali ports for periods of several weeks at various times during the past few years may have helped deter threats to the Somali regime. The stationing of ships in the Bay of Bengal during the India-Pakistan War was a visible aspect of the USSR's support for India in that conflict.

One of the few Soviet military uses of the Indian Ocean has been that of transferring ships between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Even this role has been limited however [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

To improve their support of Indian Ocean operations the Soviets recently made arrangements to expand the port facilities in Berbera, Somalia, and to conduct routine maintenance there [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

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### Caribbean Sea

The Soviet naval presence in the Caribbean Sea has been small and discontinuous but has included the USSR's more modern units. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Two political objectives have been evident in most of the Soviet naval operations in the Caribbean Sea--improvement of Soviet-Cuban relations and testing of US reactions to the Soviet naval presence.

The object of improved relations with Cuba was particularly evident during the USSR's first naval deployment to the Caribbean in 1969. Port calls coincided with Cuba's annual 26th of July celebrations and Soviet ships and sailors participated in Cuban ceremonies throughout their stay. The task group which supported this diplomatic activity included more major surface units than any subsequent Caribbean deployment.

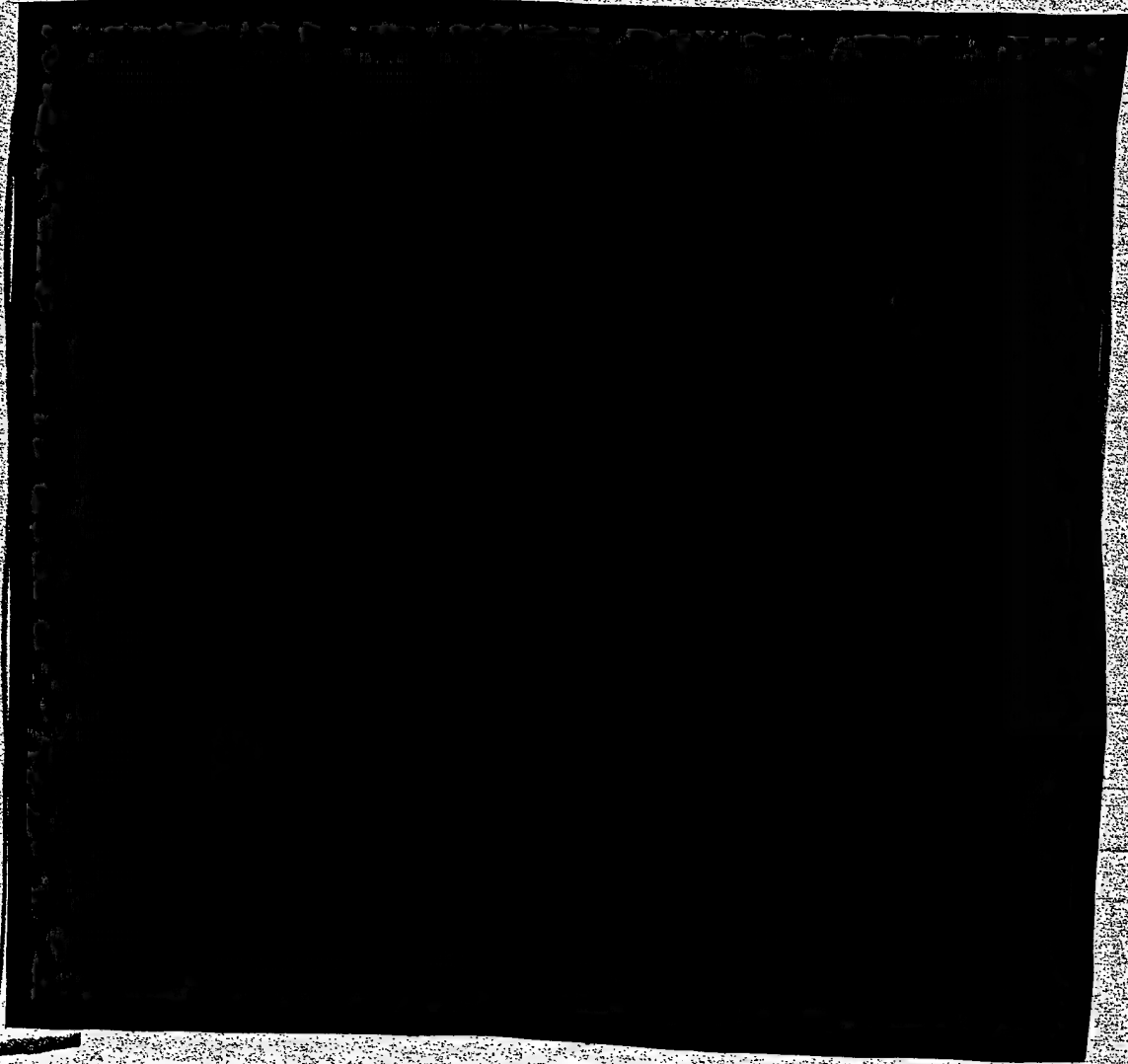
In their Caribbean exercise activity, Soviet naval units have played primarily a military assistance

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role. Ships involved in the three longest Soviet deployments to the Caribbean devoted nearly all their at-sea time to training the Cuban Navy in the use of naval equipment provided by the USSR.



The Soviets station a [REDACTED] tug in or near [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

West Africa

Prior to November 1970, Soviet naval activity in West African waters consisted only of [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] of force off Ghana in March

1968. In the Ghanaian operation, a [REDACTED] task group was deployed to West African waters in support of diplomatic efforts to obtain the release of two Soviet fishing boats and their crews which had been seized by Ghana the previous fall.

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In November 1970, the Soviets responded to Guinean President Sekou Toure's request for protection from raids by Portuguese-backed Guinean exiles by instituting a naval patrol near the Guinean coast. Since its inception the Guinea patrol has been virtually continuous, averaging one to two combatants and one support ship.

The Soviets evidently have only political purposes in maintaining a naval force near Guinea. There are no indications that the Soviet ships engaged in the Guinea patrol have conducted any exercises or tests while in West African waters or served any military purpose useful to the Soviets.

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Limitations on Routine Activity  
Outside Soviet Home Waters

There are indications that fiscal and logistic limitations affect the pace of routine Soviet naval activity. The current leveling off in Soviet deployments as a whole and some shorter term variations in activity levels within fleets may reflect these constraints.

Economic Restrictions

A 1970 directive of the Soviet Minister of Defense and a 1972 order of the Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet Navy suggested fiscal restraints on routine Soviet naval activity. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Logistic Support Limitations

The modest tempo of activity by deployed Soviet naval forces may reflect logistic support limitations. Roughly two thirds of the Soviet surface combatants and auxiliaries operating outside Soviet home waters--excluding intelligence ships--are usually in port or at anchor. This low level of activity minimizes Soviet needs for fuel, spare parts, munitions and maintenance support. The design of Soviet combatants, the small force of major support ships, and the lack of worldwide basing facilities are weak elements in the Soviet Navy's logistic infrastructure. [REDACTED]

Combatant Requirements. Soviet combatants are designed with emphases on speed and armament at the expense of range and endurance. They have marginal capabilities for underway replenishment and limited or no reloads for major weapons systems. Moreover,

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Soviet ships have relatively small crews with limited capabilities for self-repair of shipboard systems.

Support Ships. The major elements in the Soviet naval auxiliary fleet are its [REDACTED] fleet oilers, [REDACTED] submarine tenders, [REDACTED] ocean going repair ships, and [REDACTED] cruise missile support units. With the exception of the oilers, these ships are relatively small-- less than one third the size of their US counterparts.

The Soviets have recently constructed two new types of replenishment ships that are designed to transfer fuel and dry stores while underway alongside the receiving ship. These types of ships could enable small Soviet task groups to operate for longer periods on the open oceans with less dependence on fair weather for replenishment. Other Soviet auxiliaries can transfer dry stores only at anchor and are unable to refuel combatants unless they are nearly motionless in calm water with hoses over the bow or stern.

Over the past four years the USSR's use of merchant ships for fleet support has grown [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] This increased use of non-naval

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shipping probably reflects both the USSR's shortage of naval auxiliaries and a policy of preparing the Soviet merchant marine for contingency naval support.

During the India-Pakistan war, for example, two civil tankers were diverted to supply the Soviet naval force in the Indian Ocean.

Basing. No Soviet combatants are based outside the USSR and there are no Soviet naval shore establishments, other than communications relay stations, in any foreign countries. This lack of overseas shore facilities reflects a national policy which opposes the foreign basing of naval ships. Soviet naval units do have regular access to port facilities in Egypt, Somalia, Cuba, Syria, Iraq and Guinea, however.

To overcome their lack of foreign bases the Soviets have used floating bases--collections of auxiliary ships responsible for the maintenance and replenishment of out-of-area combatant forces. The work of these floating bases can be accomplished at anchorages in international waters or in foreign harbors.

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The Soviet use of floating bases minimizes their political problems, but does not give them dry-docking facilities for hull repair and in most cases does not permit resupply by aircraft. When auxiliary ship support takes place in an anchorage, the units are usually vulnerable to bad weather and the crews do not have opportunities for rest and recreation.

#### Operational Reflections of Resource Limitations

Variations in routine Soviet deployment levels indicate that resource constraints may affect the availability of ships for deployment. As an example, the activity of the Pacific Ocean Fleet was at an abnormally low level for five months following its support of unexpected deployments to the Indian Ocean and South China Sea between December 1971 and June 1972. For nearly five months following the return of the Soviet combatant task force from the South China Sea, there were no other out-of-area deployments by major combatants of the Pacific Ocean Fleet. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

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When possible the Soviets have responded to new requirements for ships in distant areas by utilizing forces already deployed. The Soviets formed what has become the Guinea Patrol by detaching ~~destroyers~~ Destroyers from their Mediterranean Squadron. At the outbreak of the India-Pakistan War the Soviets delayed the departures of the ships which had been relieved at the end of their six month deployments until the crisis had passed.

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Outlook

Analysis of the USSR's [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] prospects for increased access to  
foreign ports, and Soviet statements on naval  
operations indicates that the Soviets do not  
intend to expand the level of operations of their  
general purpose naval forces at the rate of the  
late Sixties. They do intend to improve their  
capabilities to conduct naval operations in  
distant areas, however.

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## Newer Ships

Soviet capabilities for distant naval operations will gradually be increased as a result of ongoing construction programs. Larger ships with greater cruising ranges and better capabilities for self defense are being constructed. Two examples are an aircraft carrier which was recently launched in the Black Sea, and the Kara class cruiser which made its initial deployment to the Mediterranean Sea in March 1973. Replenishment ships are not being produced with any urgency (averaging about one a year), even though these would ease Soviet support operations in distant areas.

[illegible]

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[REDACTED]

Limited Shore Support

The Soviets are working to increase their port usage rights although their prospects for much success are limited. During the past two years the Soviets have made inroads by initiating routine auxiliary ship support work in Berbera, Somalia, and Tartus, Syria--exchanging increased military aid for harbor access in each case. They may have tried unsuccessfully to conclude a port rights agreement with Guinea as well and will probably attempt to use their harbor clearing operations in Bangladesh to bargain for harbor rights there. Other countries possessing good harbors and some diplomatic ties to the USSR--such as India and Algeria--have not been interested in permitting Soviet warships to conduct support operations there.

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Continued Political Missions in Distant Areas

The comments of Soviet naval officers such as Admiral Kasatonov, Deputy Commander-in-Chief, of the Soviet Navy, on distant naval operations reflect pride in the USSR's new-found ability to conduct these operations and a growing awareness of their political utility. Political roles have been expressed primarily in terms of the Soviet Navy's ability to protect the "state interests" of the USSR around the world. The use of the Soviet Navy to strengthen ties with friendly socialist states and to end the domination of the seas by the Anglo-American navies fits within the rationale of protecting the USSR's "state interests" as a global power.

Since 1968 the Soviet Navy's accomplishments as a goodwill ambassador have also been heralded by naval leaders such as Admiral Gorshkov, Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet Navy. The fact that Soviet naval units visited 60 countries during the past three years was mentioned in every major Soviet Navy Day address in 1972.

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If the protection of "state interests" and the accomplishment of goodwill missions are the primary motivating forces behind distant Soviet naval operations--as Soviet statements indicate is the case--then future "long cruise" deployment patterns will follow foreign policy shifts as the USSR seeks political influence in various parts of the world.

#### Summary

Prior to 1964 ships of the Soviet Navy infrequently ventured outside their home waters. A policy statement by the Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet Navy, Admiral Gorshkov, in 1964 which placed unprecedented stress on the conduct of long cruises marked the beginning of more extensive deployments.

[REDACTED]

The magnitude and distribution of Soviet naval activity changed markedly during the late Sixties but stabilized in 1971 and 72. Between 1965 and 1970 Soviet naval deployments grew [REDACTED] and were extended to the Indian Ocean, Caribbean Sea and West African waters as well as the Mediterranean Sea. Since 1970 Soviet ships have deployed to no new areas

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and the time they have spent away from their local fleet operating areas has leveled off.

The current stabilizing trend may reflect fiscal and logistic constraints on routine naval deployments.

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Slumps in routine out-of-area operating levels following periods of unexpectedly high naval activity indicate that the availability of ships for deployment may constrain Soviet general purpose force operations. Also indicative of pressures for economy of ship usage are the Soviet practices of reassigning units already deployed and varying the time of force rotations to meet unexpected requirements for naval forces in distant areas.

Deployed Soviet naval forces maintain a low level of activity which creates only modest needs for resupply of fuel, spare parts and munitions and minimizes maintenance requirements. Logistic shortcomings resulting from the design features of its combatants, a small force of naval auxiliaries, and

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a lack of worldwide basing facilities also constrain a more intense level of operations.

The missions of the Soviet Navy's general purpose forces fall into two general categories: defense of the USSR against Western naval forces and the extension of Soviet political influence. Soviet naval activity in the Norwegian Sea, Mediterranean Sea and Northwestern Pacific Ocean reflects an orientation toward anti-navy missions. The USSR's newest and best armed ships usually operate in these areas. In contrast, Soviet task groups routinely assigned to waters more distant from the USSR--the Indian Ocean, Caribbean Sea and West African waters--are tailored for political roles and have low military capabilities.

The Soviets have deployed naval units out-of-area during periods of tension to either augment existing forces or establish a presence. The two most recent of these deployments indicate that the Soviets may have some forces available for quick response. Earlier contingency deployments took the form of more gradual augmentations of deployed forces.

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Analysis of Soviet construction programs, foreign basing possibilities, statements, and naval constraints indicates that any increases in routine Soviet naval deployments to distant areas during the next few years will be gradual and limited. Recent contingency deployments, however, indicate that the Soviets have forces available for quick response for non-routine operations.

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